



Archdiocese of Birmingham

INSPECTION REPORT

OUR LADY AND ST BENEDICT CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL STOKE ON TRENT

Inspection dates 18 - 19th March 2013
Reporting Inspector Mr Joseph Skivington

Inspection carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of School	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3-11 years
Number on roll	167
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governors	Mrs Diane Sims
School address	Abbey Lane Abbey Hulton Stoke on Trent ST2 8AU
Telephone number	01782 234646
E-mail address	office@olsbprimary.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	October 2010
DFE School number	861/3405
Unique Reference Number	124317

Headteacher Mrs Debbie Sims

DIOCESAN EDUCATION SERVICE



Evidence

The inspection was carried out by 1 Diocesan Inspector. The focus of the inspection was on the effectiveness and use of the school's self evaluation of religious education (RE) and Catholic life. To validate the effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation of teaching and learning, the inspector observed 5 RE lessons. In addition the inspector completed a work scrutiny and held a discussion with pupils to evaluate the impact of teaching on their learning over time. He met with the governors. He observed school assemblies, the presentation of the Catholic life of the school, and pupils' behaviour. He looked at a range of evidence related to the school's self evaluation such as RAISEonline, the development plan and teachers' planning. Alongside the validation of school self evaluation, the inspector gathered evidence about subject leadership, evidence which will be shared with other diocesan schools.

Information about the school

Our Lady and St Benedict's is a smaller than average size Catholic primary school situated in Stoke on Trent and serving the parish of the same name. The parish church is close by. There are 168 pupils on roll, of whom 30% are Catholic. Pupils come from an area of challenging socio-economic backgrounds. There are above average numbers of children with special needs and eligible for free school meals. Pupils' prior religious knowledge and experiences on entry are low. The school is part of a nine school collegiate seeking to form a multi-academy company.

Main Finding

Our Lady and St Benedict's school, in its own self evaluation, judges itself to be a school requiring further improvement to be good. The evidence gathered from the inspection validates this judgement. It is a fully inclusive school, with an openness to all, and recognising the image of God in every single individual, regardless of background or belief. All pupils benefit well from, and contribute to every area of school life, and consequently to its strong Catholic ethos. Their response to the good provision for collective worship is very positive. The provision and outcomes from the religious education programme, both teaching and learning, require improvement. The support and challenge from the governors, including the link governor for RE, is becoming more effective. Several are newly appointed, getting to grips with their responsibilities, and having to take a more proactive approach to every area that requires any or further improvement. The leadership and management of the headteacher and senior leadership team are good. They know the school well and have clear, measurable goals and objectives, which have their origin in increasingly robust and effective procedures for monitoring provision and outcomes.

School self evaluation

The school uses effective self evaluation procedures through frequent reviews and reflection on its current practice and is using a comprehensive audit, which results in achievable aims and measurable objectives incorporated into the school development plan. It can demonstrate examples of its effectiveness, in the planning and implementing development of Catholic ethos, for instance, the encouragement of staff prayer, and the provision for collective worship. The senior leadership recognises the importance of encouraging frequent feedback and reflection on the school's mission, a re-visioning of which is due in the near future, and which will hopefully involve all the pupils as well as staff and parents.

The teaching and learning of RE is monitored regularly through subject review, lesson observations, and book trawls. These are programmed and carried out with growing impact on improved performance and outcomes throughout the school. The emphasis on learning from religion is still to be developed further, a work in progress, but already pupils are developing a sound grasp of what it means in their daily lives; this is evident in their good behaviour and caring attitude towards each other. The curriculum is balanced and accessible to all pupils. It effectively provides pupils with a growing insight into the life and message of Jesus as well as the central beliefs that Catholics hold, and the link between belief and action. Pupils are given many opportunities to exercise their generosity and they do organise much charity work in the local community and beyond. . Pupils' knowledge and understanding of other major religions is sound

The subject leadership of RE brings a clear vision and a knowledgeable approach to the subject. A clear programme of assessment and tracking of pupils' progress, together with lesson observation and close scrutiny of written work is embedded and having a positive impact on progress. Planning is revised constantly and data on pupils' progress is detailed and critically analysed. A particular strength is the close and fruitful monitoring of the coverage of each unit in the syllabus. What is needed now is for the data to inform teaching and the setting of lesson learning objectives to meet the discovered needs of each pupil. The impact of this is at present blunted by the unavoidable absence of two well established teachers whose classes are at present being covered, but who will be returning before the end of this academic year or in September. There is a closely written review and summary of the impact of provision presented to the governors every year. Action points are drawn up by the subject leader after every analysis, patterns are very quickly identified, and effective focus is put where it is needed. This has led to increasing staff awareness and objectives, such as the successful emphasis on the importance of teaching for meaning, and learning from religion which the school itself has identified as a weakness.

Overall effectiveness of the school¹

Outcomes for pupils in RE require improvement to be good and they are closely linked to the variable quality of the teaching they receive. Pupils' base assessment scores in RE indicate prior knowledge and religious experience to be low. Pupils make initial rapid progress in the Foundation classes and by the end of Key Stage 1 60% are meeting or exceeding expected attainment levels. There is improving progress in Key Stage 2 so that by the end of Year 6 over 70% meet and exceed their targets. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress, which could be bettered with more targeted support such as well chosen differentiated and scaffolded tasks. Older pupils are able to speak with confidence about their learning in RE and have a sound grasp of the main tenets of the Faith and the significance and efficacy of prayer. They enjoy those lessons where they are engaged in their own learning. There is evidence that the encouragement of independent, peer and group learning is developing more enthusiastic and motivated learners. They say they enjoy RE lessons and appreciate that they have some opportunity to feedback to their teachers on how best they learn in lessons. Their positive behaviour in lessons and around the school contributes much to their learning.

The pupils through their time at Our Lady's absorb and internalise the attitudes and values inspired by the message of Jesus. They well understand the connection between these and how they should act towards others and behave in their own lives. They are quick to praise,

¹ As the quality of the school self evaluation has been affirmed, the judgements in this section of the report conform to those of the school.

to thank and to forgive. Every pupil regardless of faith, or none, feels a valued member of the school community, and participates reverently in prayer and liturgy. All pupils are familiar with the mission statement but would benefit from the opportunity to explore further their role in it. They make a positive contribution to the Catholic life of the school through pupil voice and the school council. Older pupils mentor and mediate each other and the younger pupils. There is, however, a need for all pupils to be involved and contribute more to specifically Catholic aspects of school life, say through interpreting the school's mission, perhaps a liturgy group, or planning a day or period of recollection, building on what they are doing already.

Pupils' response to prayer invitations and the rich provision is good, with an enthusiastic participation in liturgies and assemblies and opportunities for prayer. They are beginning to take the lead in planning and presenting their own class assemblies, as well as being willing servers, readers and singers at the Masses in the parish church. There is room to develop even further their skills of planning and presenting their own liturgies and becoming animators in the school as they get older. Prayer is undoubtedly an important part of their daily lives. They pray well, even the youngest, and their own prayers reflect their growing maturity and understanding. They sing with enthusiasm and feeling, as witnessed in the assembly during the inspection. Their response demonstrates their deepening spirituality and the school's vibrant life of prayer and worship. The Year 6 pupils look forward to the opportunity to go on retreat.

Provision for RE requires improvement to be good, mainly by working towards consistently good teaching. The best teaching involves the pupils fully in their own learning and encourages independent and peer work. They do the work, the teacher skilfully steers and shapes their learning through questioning that probes for understanding. Teachers are aware that their subject knowledge needs to be constantly deepened through supportive training and Inset in order to allow pupils, especially the more able, to achieve their full potential. Teaching assistants working with individual pupils provide fruitful feedback to the teacher so that individual learning needs can be better met. Lesson planning is more effective when it takes account of prior learning particularly in the case of setting lesson objectives, which target the learning needs and abilities of individual pupils. Where learning is less effective the teacher has planned one task for all which has the effect of both defeating the less able and not challenging the more able to make real intellectual effort. Questioning needs to have more challenge and higher expectations, as well as probing and checking continually for understanding. The quality and helpfulness of the marking of written work is improving. The marking policy is now being consistently followed, but there is inconsistency in the quality of the teacher's comment and the pupil's response which makes it a less effective tool and missed opportunity to show pupils how they can improve. It has yet to have a significant impact on progress over time.

Assessment procedures are successfully embedded and provide for the close tracking of individual progress, with teachers becoming increasingly confident in assessing using the level indicators, supported enormously by the RE co-ordinator employing frequent joint assessment and moderation meetings. This, in the best practice, is leading to the smarter use of pupil data to inform lesson objectives and teaching strategies, and its impact over time in these classes is beginning to show.

The curriculum is broad, balanced, closely linked to the Diocesan Strategy, and accessible to all. The newly introduced relationships programme, *All that I Am*, is in line with Catholic guidelines. Recent work to promote the need to evidence and assess aspects of attainment target 2 has meant staff are increasingly aware of the importance and place of learning from religion, and the need to incorporate it as a focus in their lesson planning. The school continues to build on its links with other faiths, and cultures around the world, for example

the celebration of Diwali. As a result, pupils can speak with some understanding of similarities and differences between religions. School and parish work closely together to run the well planned and fruitful sacramental preparation programmes which provide an evident impetus within the RE curriculum.

The quality of the provision for collective worship is good. The well constructed liturgies follow the Church's liturgical year, and are echoed by some excellent displays in classrooms and around the school, and traditional Catholic practices such as the Rosary in October and Stations of the Cross. The curriculum makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development. Mass is celebrated regularly with pupils taking an active role with great enthusiasm. IT is used effectively both in lessons and assemblies to colour and flesh out the topics and themes. Links with the parish and involvement in parish life are a growing strength.

Recommendations

- Improve the quality and impact of teaching on learning so that it is consistently good and better.
- Provide increased opportunities for all pupils to develop the skills of planning and presenting their own liturgies and assemblies.
- Develop further the emphasis on learning from religion, particularly by encouraging pupils to write more at length and reflectively on what the topics they are studying mean for them.



Diocesan Education Service,
Don Bosco House,
Coventry Road,
Coleshill,
B46 3EA

March 30th 2012

Dear Parents and Carers

Section 48 (Diocesan) Inspection of Our Lady and St Benedict's Primary School Stoke on Trent.

I am writing this letter to share with you the findings of the diocesan inspection of your children's school. Diocesan inspection now explores in detail the school's own view of itself as expressed in its self-evaluation. For this reason, much of the report is more technical than used to be the case. You are still entitled to have a copy of the full report should you want one and it will be available on the school website or by request from the school office.

The school has a good Catholic ethos which informs all that it does. The leadership is making a significant impact on developing its Catholicity, based solidly on clear self evaluation, which will sustain and move the school swiftly forward. Pupils speak highly of the school and are using the opportunities to become involved and take ownership of their own education well. Their attainment and achievement requires improvement to be good. The pupils enjoy their work in RE and are eager and valued members of the school community. Teaching in RE requires improvement to be good.

I have recommended that the school should improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good and better, and provide opportunities for pupils to reflect in more extended writing what they are learning from religion. Also, the school should encourage more pupils to develop the skills of planning and presenting their own liturgies and assemblies. I met and talked with many of the pupils, whom I found were invariably welcoming and courteous. I was impressed by the contribution they make to the school community and their own education. They are a credit to the school and to their families and those who care for them.

It was a pleasure and privilege to inspect Our Lady and St Benedict's and I wish it every success on its journey towards excellence.

Yours sincerely

Joseph Skivington
Diocesan Inspector